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Adam J Hantman 05/15/2007 09:32:52 AM From DB/Inbox: Adam J Hantman

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SHENYANG 00079

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000079

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E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION
TAGS: PREF PREL PINR PGOV KN KS CH
SUBJECT: NORTH KOREA ROUNDUP: PROPAGANDA, REMITTANCES,
PUST, DIPLOMATICS AND SNOW DAYS

REF: 06 SHENYANG 01190

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL STEPHEN B. WICKMAN. REASONS 1.4 (B)/(D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: This is a roundup of North Korea-related information collected by Post in recent weeks. Contacts report that nuclear propaganda has recently started disappearing in North Korea's major cities, including Pyongyang. Pyongyang's private university, PUST, appears to be back on track as its founders await the final blessing--in the form of licenses for computers and lab equipment--from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Elaborate networks of brokers on both sides of the PRC-DPRK border permit North Koreans illegally in China to remit their earnings to North Korea with relative ease. A Chinese academic says that North Korea's new Consul General in Shenyang has an exceptionally strong "political background" compared to his predecessors. The North Korean military in Rajin conscripted and bused civilians to outlying areas to clear snow during March's massive snowstorm, which paralyzed a large section of the country. END SUMMARY.

NUKE PROPAGANDA ON THE OUTS?

¶2. (C) Two sources who travel to North Korea on a routine basis have recently mentioned that nuclear propaganda has

disappeared in places they frequent, including in at least two major cities. Dr. James Kim, head of the Yanbian University of Science and Technology (YUST), on April 4 told Poloff and visiting SENK staffer John Kachtik that during his most recent trip to Pyongyang in late March, the propaganda trumpeting the North's October 2006 nuclear test previously posted throughout the city had abruptly disappeared. A Yanbian-based western NGO worker who travels to the DPRK twice per month reported to Poloff on April 9 that the same held true in Rajin, where he carries out humanitarian work every month.

PYONGYANG'S PRIVATE UNIVERSITY BACK ON TRACK?

¶13. (C) Plagued by long delays over the past several years and compounded by the DPRK's 2006 missile/nuclear tests (see ref A), Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST)--North Korea's first private university--may finally open in September 2007, according to the institution's China-based coordinator. According to PUST's project manager, David Kim, construction of all buildings should be completed in July. But the wild card, according to Kim, remains the U.S. Department of Commerce, to whom the PUST project team--based at YUST in Yanji--is now applying for the appropriate export licenses for classroom computers and certain equipment (e.g., for science laboratories).

UNDERGROUND BANKING: REMITTANCE NETWORKS

¶14. (C) Fairly elaborate networks of cross-border financial brokers are permitting North Korean border-crossers in northeast China to remit their earnings to North Korea with some ease. A Shenyang-based Chinese scholar recently described to Poloff how a female North Korean acquaintance illegally living and working in Shenyang remits earnings to her mother back home in North Korea. Every few weeks, after accumulating enough money to send home, the individual--through a local Shenyang broker--deposits money to be sent into a post office account registered in Yanji, capital of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. Once the money has been deposited, the Shenyang-based broker then phones his Yanji-based partner (who owns the mailbox), who in turn contacts a partner in North Korea, who subsequently delivers the funds to the Shenyang-based North Korean's mother. (NOTE: No money actually crosses the border for the specific transaction. The Yanji and DPRK-based partners maintain a trust-based accounting system (i.e., informal correspondant accounts). END
NOTE.) The entire transaction process takes approximately one hour and is conducted entirely in RMB in both countries. The brokers take a certain percentage of the total value of the transfer, though the amount is unclear.

NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATS IN SHENYANG

¶15. (C) The DPRK's new-ish Consul General in Shenyang, LI Jifan (rendered in pinyin--probably Ri Gipan in Korean), is something of an anomaly, according to a Shenyang-based Chinese scholar chummy with a number of North Korean diplomats stationed in Shenyang. Unlike his many predecessors, Li--a former Director of the DPRK Foreign Ministry's China shop--is not only a career diplomat but also a proficient Chinese speaker. Li's "political background" is also apparently unusually strong, according to the scholar; some North Korean diplomats have confided to him that they have on occasion heard Li issuing orders to visiting officials in more senior positions than he.

NORTH KOREAN SNOW DAYS

¶16. (C) A massive snowstorm in early March 2007 walloped northeast China but paralyzed a large section of North Korea. According to a Yanbian-based western NGO worker in Rajin at the time of the storm, the snow virtually

incapacitated the city. Residents and government workers in Rajin had neither plows nor many shovels, he said. Our contact witnessed citizens flood into the streets, using wooden planks as shovels. Employing picks, axes and hammers, residents sat in the streets chipping away at the ice on the ground. The local military, he said, compelled soldiers and ordinary citizens to shovel the snow. Once Rajin was sufficiently cleared, military personnel conscripted certain Rajin residents to continue elsewhere; the unlucky ones were bused to neighboring localities with the soldiers to continue their snow-clearing duties, slowly making their way north toward the border. Such was the snow-driven slowdown that it eventually took our contact--several days later than he had expected--nearly eight hours to return home to Yanbian from Rajin--nearly double what it normally takes by car.

WICKMAN